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6. Trilingual Education in the Aran Valley: Occitan, Catalan and Spanish.

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6.1 Context

6.1.1 Location

The Aran Valley is an Occitan-speaking region on the northern slopes of the central part of the Pyrenees, under Spanish State administration. It is a border area in various senses: it has traditionally been isolated from the other regions in the same state on the other side of the Pyrenees and, at the same time, it is separated from the rest of the Occitan region by national borders. Nevertheless, the territorial relationships can in fact be viewed in another sense, too. Through their physical proximity, the Aranese maintain a close relationship with other Occitans, reducing the role of the political frontier to a relative one. The political link with Catalonia and the rest of the Spanish state has shaped the continuing historical relationship with their southern neighbours and, more recently, with the Spanish and Catalan administrative apparatus. In both cases, there has been an extension of the close relationships formed by these territorial connections, subsequently leading to significant cultural and linguistic developments.

Geopolitical context

It is important to mention that the Aran Valley lies within the territory administered by the Government of Catalonia, one of the so-called Autonomous Communities of the Spanish State. This Community has certain recognised rights over its own language - Catalan - through its Statute of Autonomy (a particular legislative framework applicable to this part of the Spanish State). Since 1979, this framework has recognised the linguistic identity of the Catalan language, as opposed to Spanish, and the particular nature of Occitan in the Aranese region. Along these lines, Catalan was declared an official language, alongside Spanish, throughout autonomously

administered Catalan territory. Occitan was declared an official language, alongside Catalan and Spanish, in the Aranese region. This Statute, as reformed in 2006, declares that from then on, Occitan (called Aranese in the Aran Valley) is an official language in all autonomous Catalan-administered territory. This fact has created entirely new prospects, although Occitan is currently still facing certain problems in the Aran Valley region itself.

The management of Aranese in schools is the responsibility of the General Council of Aran, an administrative body with its own powers over Aranese affairs (education, culture, tourism, etc.).

Demography

The Aran Valley currently has about 7,200 inhabitants, in a region measuring 620 km². Traditionally, the valley caused a flow of migration into French or Catalan territory, particularly seasonal, but in the last five decades it has become a region welcoming people from outside the area as well. Immigration mainly took place from Spain, and this has had a far-reaching impact on the region – not only from a demographic perspective, but also in cultural terms.

Since the 1960s, large-scale industrial tourism has been witnessed as the basic means of economic activity in the Aran Valley. In the meantime, the farming/stock rearing sector, which had until then been dominant, has been abandoned almost completely.

Between 1981 and 1996, the number of inhabitants increased by 22.7%. This increase was due to the contribution of immigrants. Specifically, between 1991 and 1996, for the first time, the number of inhabitants born in the valley dropped from 52.26% to 45.98%, thus creating a minority group. In addition, in terms of language, it must be borne in mind that a good number of those born in the Aran Valley do not have Occitan as their mother tongue, as they come from immigrant families that have settled in the region from the 1960s onwards. In conclusion: the demographic contribution of the Spanish language then made itself felt as an important sociolinguistic factor.

As a consequence, the school language project adopted by the Garona primary school was conceived on the basis of the contrasting percentages related to the home languages spoken by the pupils.

As for the 2009-2010 school year, the figures are as follows:

Occitan (Aranese)	26%
Catalan	20%
Spanish	33.5%
Gallician	6%
Roumanian	6%
Arabic	6%
Portuguese	2%
French	0.5%

Languagepolicy

Before 1979, only Spanish was recognised at institutional levels, in the media and in education. The promotion of the native language, then, began with quite restrictive conditions in terms of applicability: not only related to the demographic component, which required the entry into the planning agents' calculations of any possibilities in terms of the likely perception among the target population, but definitely also related to the lack of a written tradition or the use of Occitan in formal contexts. This had consequences for the characteristics of the language itself in use within the family (with visible interference from Spanish), and also concerning its level of prestige. Both factors are closely connected as a result of the exclusive presence of Spanish as the long-standing official language - going back centuries. This aspect became apparent, for example, in the difficulties arising when it came to producing a proposal for a consistent codification to be adopted for written Aranese - the general spelling reference applied to modern Occitan, as explained by Lamuela (1987).

The adoption of a clear spelling reference was a necessary condition for applying a public programme to teach Occitan and also to teach *in* Occitan. At the same time, it was essential to have the means to construct and disseminate the planned content.

Among the sociolinguistic planning agents in the Aran Valley, schools are by far the most important and, as they play a vital role in the inter-generational transmission of the language, they act as catalysts for the diverse range of attitudes surrounding them as well as for speakers' evaluations of the

linguistic situation. Schools not only disseminate the language; they are also an agent spreading a language model. Also, on this more qualitative point, we find that the three official languages in Aran are used in different situations: for Spanish, a widespread, well-known normative model is selected; a less well-known one is chosen for Catalan; and a third one is adopted at an incipient phase of dissemination for Occitan.

The table below shows that the percentage of people who can speak Occitan in the Aran Valley has clearly fallen in the last twenty-five years. The reasons for this are concerned with the contribution of immigrants. Still, schooling has partly compensated for this reduction, and this is made clear in the increase in the percentage of those who can read and write the language:

Command of Occitan	1984	1996	2001
% understanding	93.30	90.05	88.88
% speaking	79.19	64.85	62.24
% reading	24.61	59.20	58.44
% writing	8.96	24.97	26.69

Source: Idescat and Climent (1986)

6.1.2 Languages

The languages in the Aranese schools that we are concerned with here are first and foremost those which have official status in the Aranese region, namely Occitan, Catalan and Spanish. However, it must be said that English and French also have a presence as vehicular languages, although predominantly at secondary school level.

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 does not specify the names of the languages subject to protection when, in article 3, it establishes that “the rest” of the State’s languages will be considered co-official, together with Spanish, as established by the respective Autonomous Communities.¹¹

Finally, following the reforms approved in 2006, the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia establishes that Occitan is official throughout the Catalan territory administered by the Government of Catalonia, so not only in the Aranese region.

6.1.3 Schools

Education in the Aran Valley is organised in eight schools, one of which, in Vielha, includes both primary and secondary education, while the other seven offer only primary education. Of these, two centres, Les and Bossòst, can organise separate classes for different levels while the other five (es Bòrdes, Aubèrt, Arties, Gessa and Salardú) are unitary schools, where pupils from different levels share a classroom.

There are no private schools in the Aran Valley, meaning that all schools apply the same model in dealing with languages, with a minimal difference between them. The differences basically stem from the size of the centres; that is, the number of pupils studying there and the organisational possibilities this offers, depending on the human resources available.

¹¹ It is phrased as follows:

1. *Castilian is the official Spanish language of the State.*
2. *The other Spanish languages will also be official in the respective Autonomous Communities, in accordance with their Statutes.*
3. *The wealth of Spain's different linguistic forms is a cultural heritage which should be subject to special respect and protection.*

The Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia of 1979, in article 3, determines:

1. *The language of Catalonia is Catalan.*
2. *The Catalan language is official in Catalonia, as is Castilian Spanish, which is official throughout the Spanish State.*
3. *The Catalan government will guarantee the normal, official use of both languages; will take the necessary measures to ensure knowledge of them, and will create the conditions making it possible for them to achieve full equality...*
4. *The Aranese language will be subject to teaching and to special respect and protection.*

The Act establishing the Special System for the Aran Valley (Act 16/1990, 13 July), which determines the powers of the General Council of Aran, states: *Aranese, a variety of the Occitan language native to Aran, is official in the Aran Valley. Catalan and Spanish are also official there, in accordance with article 3 of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia.*

It should be taken into account here that only one centre – Vielha – is large enough not to be considered a typical rural school, while the smaller five (es Bòrdes, Aubèrt, Arties, Gessa and Salardú) constitute a network differentiated in terms of the use and management of resources (which in Catalonia is called the Rural School Area -ZER: Zona Escolar Rural). Here, we find schools with just twelve pupils or less in each grade. For example, the schools of Les have 90 pupils, Bossòst has 96, but Aubèrt has 7 pupils and Gessa has 5. In contrast, the school of Vielha has 520 pupils. All these numbers apply to the 2009-2010 school year. It should be pointed out that this contrast between centres with almost urban features (in terms of the number of pupils, mobility of the population, etc.) and other typically rural ones has given rise to a highly interesting array of experiences when it comes to dealing with linguistic diversity. Some innovations have been implemented in all schools after being pioneered in some of the smaller schools.

6.2 Input

6.2.1 Pupils

The number of pupils concerned in pre-primary and primary education is 820 in the 2009-2010 school year. Nevertheless, some demographic features affecting the linguistic components should be noted.

6.2.2 Age

In the Spanish State, the minimum compulsory age for schooling is six, but public education is guaranteed from the age of three at P3, P4 and P5 levels (pre-school for those aged three, four and five). Primary education as such runs from ages six to twelve and is organised in three cycles, each lasting two years: initial cycle (up to eight), middle cycle (up to ten) and higher cycle (up to twelve).

The Periodisation of Language Treatment Resulting from the Legal Background

The way languages are dealt with in Aranese schools and its development to date derive from a compromise between the legislative context of autonomous Catalonia and the particular demographic and cultural context of the Aran Valley. So, the periodisation used to introduce the three official languages in education applies to the provisions of the law for Catalan and Occitan. The principle operating in the background is that education must favour the minority language in order to compensate for the dominant social presence of the majority language. In this way, pupils should achieve a balanced knowledge of the two languages. The teaching background is related to the transfer of competences: these can be dealt with on the basis of the minority language, something which in fact ends up benefiting both languages (minority as well as majority). This principle has generally been applied to Catalan, which finds itself in an imbalanced position compared with the more advantageous position of Spanish. Concerning Occitan, the legislative framework is not so demanding, but it follows that it should be given a similar treatment in its own region. As we have said, the particular context of the Aranese community has affected the final results, and the difficulties concerning materials and human resources must also be borne in mind.

The so-called Catalan Linguistic Normalisation Act of 1983 affects non-university education. Article one stipulates that: “the Catalan and Spanish languages must be taught compulsorily at all levels, in all types and degrees of non-university education in all public or private schools”. In an additional note, the Act stipulates that “Aranese will also be taught in schools in the Aran Valley”. The same Decree provides for the need to train teachers, when it says (article 10.3) that “Aranese courses will be organised for teachers who have to teach in schools in the Aran Valley”. Article 12 states that “Aranese may also be used in internal activities in schools in the Aran Valley”. Concerning administrative use in schools, the law establishes that Catalan must be used and states that “Aranese may also be used in the Aran Valley”. The same optional provision is established for communications with the general public outside the centre and for notifications that need to be placed on notice boards, as well as for the names of schools. In addition, Decree 362/1983 devotes point 4 of article 15 to establishing that “the Department of Education will offer free Aranese classes to the non-teaching staff [at schools in the Aran Valley]”.

As a result, Aranese retraining courses for primary school teachers in the valley began during the 1983-1984 academic year. Since then, the courses have been run by the General Council of Aran. In the summer of 1983, the teachers also organised the first Teaching Conference, which later became what is known as the Summer School, held in August.

More than eighty per cent of the Aranese teachers now have the proper qualifications for teaching Occitan and teaching in Occitan in primary education.

These provisions also resulted in the establishment of the so-called Experimental Plan to Promote Aranese from the 1985-1986 school year onwards, leading to the introduction of Occitan into schools for two hours a week, in lesson time. That same year, some schools also began teaching subjects in Aranese.

Finally, in the 1988-1989 academic year, the Garona school (the pre-school and primary school centre in Vielha) offered the opportunity for children to be taught in Aranese as the vehicular language through an option of three possible class-groups depending on the vehicular language used¹²: Occitan, Catalan or Spanish. Other schools in the valley, all of them smaller and most of them unitary schools, began to use Occitan as the vehicular language. In all the options referred to (vehicular language Occitan, Catalan or Spanish), there was parallel teaching of the other two languages, which could be organised in different ways in terms of timetabling. So, one of the possible combinations was to devote teaching in the morning exclusively to content taught in Occitan and to devote teaching in the afternoon to content relating to Catalan or Spanish (two or three hours a week in each of the two languages).

¹² Concerning the spirit of this initiative and the medium-term intentions: see Perera (1988).

Certain points in Decree 363/1983 that could be seen as rather ambiguous were taken up again in the Order of 3 August 1990 “under which Aranese, a form of the Occitan language, is incorporated into the curriculums of the schools of the Aran Valley”.¹³

As a result of this Order, the teaching of Aranese for two hours a week was extended to secondary education. In addition, in primary education, Occitan was the language used for content concerning the Aran Valley in the areas of social and natural sciences.

A few months later, the application of these articles was detailed in the Resolution of 31 December 1990 “establishing the relevant guidelines for the implementation of the Order of 3 August 1990”. In this Resolution, article 2 stipulates that “pupils at both levels, primary and secondary, should be compulsorily taught Aranese and the result of the assessments should be incorporated into the school record book and grade list and should also appear in the pupil’s academic file”. In addition, it says that “the subject ‘Aranese language’ should, for all purposes, be considered administratively and academically equal to the other subjects relating to official languages in Catalonia”.

¹³ The most important articles in this order, for our current considerations, are:

Article 2.- Aranese will be taught for two hours a week in the language section of the curriculum in all primary and secondary schools. It may be implemented progressively in secondary education.

Article 3.- The areas of experiences and social sciences at primary levels of education may be taught in the Occitan language. In addition, Aranese will always be used to teach the content of the programme concerning the natural and social environment of the Aran Valley.

Article 4.- Primary schools, via the language plan drawn up by the teaching staff, will gradually incorporate the use of the Occitan language into teaching and may present proposed timetables for alternating teaching in the form of Occitan in the Aran Valley.

Article 5.- As the language of the Aran Valley, Aranese will be incorporated into the internal and external communication of Aranese schools.

Article 6.- Teachers with academic accreditation in Aranese or oral knowledge of the language have to comply with the content of this resolution as part of the extension of the experimental plan established in it.

Decree 75/1992 of 9 March, “establishing the general organisation of infant education, primary education and compulsory secondary education in Catalonia” leaves it in the hands of the General Council to formalise the “Aranese language curriculum”. This curriculum was approved by the General Council of Aran in February 1998 (see Conselh Generau d’Aran, 1998).

This legislative picture changed following the Resolution of 11 June 1996, “giving instructions for the organisation and operation of public schools in Catalonia concerning infant, primary and special education for the academic year 1996-1997”. In point 1.2.3, this Resolution declared that “in the Aran Valley, Aranese, as the local language, will normally be the vehicular language of learning, in accordance with current regulations”.

6.2.3 Teachers

The previous sections gave an idea of the legislative requirements to be applied in terms of the necessary training that primary school teachers have to receive in order to meet the demands of dealing with the languages concerned.

Decree 244/1991 of 28 October, “on knowledge of the two official languages concerning the filling of teaching posts at non-university public education centres in Catalonia for which the Department of Education is responsible”, establishes that compulsory knowledge of Catalan and Spanish for teachers working at schools in Catalonia for which the Catalan government is responsible is extended to Occitan for teachers working in the Aran Valley: “spoken and written knowledge of Aranese must also be accredited” (additional provision 3).

Through their training, irrespective of whether or not they are of Aranese origin, teachers working in the Aran Valley in principle have a sufficient knowledge of Catalan and Spanish. This minimum knowledge is guaranteed by Catalan legislation and applies to the entire area of primary and secondary education so that, once this is completed, all pupils have achieved a balanced mastery of Catalan and Spanish. Although this is not always confirmed in practice, the University must ensure in all cases that students trained as primary school teachers achieve sufficient mastery of Catalan and Spanish to teach those languages as part of their activities.

The above does not apply to Occitan, however. Non-native teachers working in the Aran Valley must spend a year receiving education in Aranese Occitan, enabling them to use this language for their professional work. The General Council of Aran guarantees training up to what is known as C1 - B2 level in the European standardisation system (CEFR). However, it must also be said that the vast majority of teachers working in Aranese schools are people born in Aran, who normally have Occitan as L1.

One access route to mastery of Aranese Occitan is university education, but this is not generally available. Only the University of Lleida, on its own initiative, established in 1998 the possibility to learn the language up to knowledge level C (as established by the General Council) thanks to a dissemination programme financed by the European Commission. A good number of students selected this option and some of them are currently working in the Aran Valley, so the results may be termed highly promising and of great interest. However, the Spanish government has substantially altered the organisation of Primary School Teaching studies, as a result of which the chance to learn Occitan has virtually disappeared. However, in the current academic year (2009-2010), the University of Lleida has opened a new specialisation – Catalan and Occitan studies – offering access to specialisation courses. In addition, the language service at the same university organises additional beginners' courses in the Occitan language.

With the declaration of Occitan as an official language throughout the region, changes in the Catalan legislative framework have made it possible to consider and organise forms of education that are sufficiently stable and easily accessible from the entire region administered by the Government of Catalonia.

6.2.4 Teaching Materials

The codification approved at the beginning of the 1980s and the creation of the Teaching Resources Centre, together with the goodwill demonstrated by teachers and the collaboration between institutions, have led to a good number of publications aimed at children, for the benefit of schools as well as wider audiences: the *Era Gabarra* story collection, published by La Galera (with more than twenty titles); the *Parpalhòla* collection (for infant education, see Amiell et al., 1995 a and b, and 1997 a and b); the *Aran* series (for primary

education, see Pérez et al., 1989, and Vergés et al., 1990); *Lectures basiques* (for primary and secondary education, see Naranjo and Vergés, 1987), and finally also a dictionary basically intended for school use (Vergés, 1991). However, it must be pointed out in this respect that there are fewer materials aimed at children in Occitan than there are in Catalan or Spanish. Often, as teachers report in personal conversations and communications, they have to produce materials in Occitan by adapting existing materials published in Catalan or Spanish. Moreover, they report that the human resources required for this task cannot be found.

As for writing texts, the desire must be noted to establish resources to bring the Aranese model closer to the models in use in the rest of Occitania. The very practice of codification evidences this, but it is also visible in the application of linguistic resources that are quite innovative in comparison with the more common models in the Aranese context of Catalan and Spanish. In this respect, we specifically refer to stylistic resources for writing texts.¹⁴

In general, given that all three languages have a presence as vehicular languages, there are no specific materials intended for teaching each of the languages (except those commonly used for the introduction of reading/writing or the methods commonly used for teaching Catalan or Spanish as subjects). However, Occitan shows certain gaps in this sense, and materials commonly used in Catalan or Spanish for teaching language subjects are often adapted in-house to be applied to Occitan. This task receives little institutional support except for the work done by the Teaching Resource Centre and work carried out by the teachers themselves, who design materials for internal use in the face of the lack of methods produced by publishers.

In general, what we refer to here is written materials, not audiovisual ones. When it comes to this type of teaching material, very little is available for any of the three languages.

¹⁴ See Suïls and Furness (1999) concerning certain problems encountered in writing language in the Aranese context. Concerning the discussion at the beginning of the 1980s, see Viaut (1986 and 1987).



6.2.5 Visualisation

The above picture shows the entrance of the school: five announcements in different languages. There is an announcement from a group of museums in Vielha and another one from a tennis school (left), both published by the council of Vielha. The first is in Spanish and the second is in Occitan (for the two target audiences). The yellow announcements at the top and in the centre are both in Occitan: one of them is about the offer of seasonal ski forfaits (an exclusive service for the Aranese people) and the other (in the middle) is about stage activities for children. The other two are in Catalan, offering information about certain courses of different contents offered by private parties.

This particular photograph was taken in a classroom for P4 pupils (four-year olds). It shows the list of those who are present or absent, the menu of the day or the announcement of an anniversary - all in Occitan. The names of certain objects are visible on a label: in this case “hièstra” (window). In contrast, shop signs or placards announcing private services in the streets



are mainly put in Spanish; sometimes in Catalan, and even less often in Occitan.

The blackboard in the above picture shows the date and that day's number of pupils, in Occitan: "èm 12" (we are twelve); 6 mainatges 6 mainades (six boys and six girls). It also shows labels indicating "taulèu" (blackboard) and "ordenador" (computer) as well as the names of certain colours.

6.3 Process

6.3.1 Time

In this section, we shall explain the specific configuration of the Aranese model for dealing with languages in schools following developments after the 1999-2000 academic year.

In education, the legislative stipulations deriving from the Linguistic Normalisation Act 7/1983 would appear to treat Occitan less clearly than Catalan. Decree 362/1983, which was intended to establish the first application of this Act in non-university spheres, determined that Catalan and Spanish had to be taught at all levels in all public and private schools. Concerning Aranese, it stated, as we have seen, that "Aranese will also be taught at schools in the Aran Valley", without specifying whether it had to be taught to the same degree as Catalan. Meanwhile, article 6 says that "Catalan, as the language of Catalonia, is also the language of education", something that is not stated for Occitan in Aran, in accordance with the fact that this language is assigned an optional presence - and not always a compulsory presence. All provisions formulated to make Catalan compulsory include an additional note at the end concerning Aranese, but they refer to it as optional and not compulsory. As far as this aspect is amended in the aforementioned Resolution of 11 June 1996, it refers only to infant and primary education.

Nevertheless, this constituted a first step towards the gradual extension of the teaching of Occitan in the Aran Valley and a final possibility for Occitan to become the vehicular language during the first years of primary education.¹⁵

¹⁵ See Seira (1994) for a description of the pre-school model and the first stage of primary education until the beginning of the 1990s

In the 1994-1995 academic year, classes using Spanish as a vehicular language were discontinued. Classes using Catalan were abolished in the 1996-1997 academic year. This enabled Aranese schools to change over to the situation permitted by the Resolution of 11 June 1996 mentioned in the previous section. The result is a model taking Occitan as the vehicular language as far as the end of the Initial Cycle of primary education. Then, until the end of primary education, the system alternates the use of the three languages, where content related to social sciences is taught in Occitan, mathematical content is taught in Spanish and other content is taught in Catalan. This situation has become the general language approach throughout the valley.

In order to understand the resulting state of affairs, a distinction must be made between the current model, that is the one that has been applied after the discontinuation of classes taught only in Catalan and Spanish, and the model as it was before this discontinuation. We have seen that the first version of the model offered the opportunity to choose one (or another) of the languages as vehicular until the end of the initial cycle of primary education. This flexibility was clearly in line with the programme to maintain Occitan and Catalan without wishing to make any impositions on the majority of families who have Spanish as their habitual language. In this way, the school's Language Plan assumed that, in the light of the pupils' family linguistic situation, the majority composition of each class would see home and school languages coinciding.

In practice, this meant that there were Occitan-speaking parents who chose classes taught in Spanish for their children and Spanish-speaking parents who opted for classes taught in Catalan, etc. A variety of situations resulted, ranging from a model of L1 maintenance (Catalan- or Occitan-speaking parents choosing the Catalan or Occitan lines respectively) to a model in which classroom composition was, mildly put, rather mixed in terms of the family linguistic situation when a large number of Spanish-speaking pupils were enrolled in a class with schooling in Occitan or Catalan. Finally, submersion programmes became available in which pupils with a minority L1 receive tuition in Spanish.

It is clear that the justification of models like the above lies in the avoidance of any potential conflict between the public administration and the parents of pupils which might have arisen had Occitan been proposed as the principal

vehicular language. In a way, then, the Aranese case is an exception in Catalonia as a whole, and the Administration itself accepts that everything that is applied to Catalan cannot be applied to Occitan. Still, practice has shown results to be very different from what had been assumed, eventually leading to a specifically defined model.¹⁶

6.4 Output

6.4.1 Research and Results

To date, very few studies have been carried out on the results of the Aranese model for dealing with languages in schools. We mention Suïls (2001), summarised in Suïls, Huguet & Lamuela (2001) and Suïls & Huguet (2003). This study considered the results in terms of linguistic knowledge of Occitan, Catalan and Spanish in the 1999-2000 academic year. The results for all pupils in the valley were observed at the end of each primary education cycle - 2nd, 3rd and 6th years. Language knowledge was examined by means of comprehensive tests (ranging from lexical competence to reading and writing) in order to obtain scores between 0 and 100 points for each pupil. The family linguistic environment, the language curriculum and intelligence scores were considered individually.

All this has shown that there are still pupils who were taught in each of the three languages as a means of learning, as they came from the model where this differentiation had not yet been applied in favour of Occitan.

In sum, we can observe that the linguistic knowledge exhibited by pupils who have been taught in Occitan throughout their school careers, from the first stages onwards, is enhanced in all three languages, not only Occitan, regardless of the family linguistic environment.

¹⁶ - P3 to 1st year of primary education (between ages 3 and 6): Occitan as vehicular language; presence of Catalan and Spanish, not written, as a subject of teaching for two hours a week for each non-vehicular language;
- 2nd year of primary education (age 7): Occitan as vehicular language and introduction of written Catalan and Spanish this year for two hours a week for each non-vehicular language;
- 3rd year of primary education to 6th year of primary education (between ages 8 - 12): teaching alternating the three languages throughout the valley: in general, mathematics in Spanish, content related to social sciences in Occitan and the rest in Catalan
- The learning of French (two hours a week) is introduced in the 3rd year of primary education and the learning of English (two hours a week) is introduced in the 5th year of primary education.

That is, even pupils whose mother tongue was Spanish obtained better results if their schooling had taken place in Occitan rather than Spanish or Catalan. However, the option in which Occitan was the vehicular language did not iron out the social imbalance between languages: in all cases, Spanish was the language where the best average results were obtained and Occitan always came off worst. The subsequent proposal based on these conclusions was that the role of Occitan as a vehicular language should be increased throughout primary education, and that this strategy should also be extended to secondary education.

Today, in secondary education, only two hours of teaching Occitan are guaranteed per week. This means that the results achieved in primary education in terms of the relative balance between the languages are somewhat reduced in an environment – secondary education – where Occitan is clearly at a disadvantage compared with Spanish and Catalan. This is also related to the types of teachers we find in secondary education, who are generally much more mobile than they previously were and who often are insufficiently competent to teach in Occitan.

6.5 Additional Information

We also mention Suïls et al (1998) here, summarised in Suïls (2002) and in Suïls & Huguet (2007). This study investigated the attitudes of the Aranese towards their native language and showed, in relation to schools, that schooling in Occitan, which up to that point (1998) had been increasing for primary school pupils, exerted an effect on language transmission by parents. This meant that those with school-age children often became involved in the process, adapting themselves linguistically if they did not have Occitan as their mother tongue and always showing a clearly positive attitude towards the linguistic vitality of Occitan.

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